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Black Seidhe

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The **Aen Nílfe** (*People of the Mist, Mist Folk*), erroneously known in the Northern Kingdoms as the "*Black Seidhe*," are one of the many elven cultures that emerged following the arrival of the elves in the world during the Age of Migration, and in the subsequent golden age in which they came to dominate large portions of the Old Continent.

Established in the Alba Valley—within what is now the province of the Lower Alba, at the core of the modern Nilfgaard—the Aen Nílfe would become the founders of the future imperial capital, then known as Nífl Garðr (Elder Speech: *Misty Garden*).

They also became the ancestors of the Nilfgaardians, after intermixing with the human tribes of the region and forming a nation that retained much of its elven language, beliefs, customs, and culture: the Kingdom of Nilfgaard.

In addition, they were the creators of the

Aen Nílfe

General information

Classification	Elven culture
Languages	Elder Speech (with Ellylon influences)
Locations	From the Alba Basin and adjacent territories along the western coast, to the south, southwest, northwest, and northern regions of Ofir, as well as parts of Melukka and, to a lesser extent, Zangvebar.

political entity that preceded the later human kingdom, republic, and finally empire: a state known as Ór Ard Rhion (Elder Speech: *Golden High Kingdom*). This entity is often mistranslated and misinterpreted as the "*Golden Empire*," despite the fact that elves did not possess such a concept.

Physical Characteristics	
Skin color	From pale to swarthy with dark golden or reddish hues as they tanned
Hair color	Amber, red, yellow, and black to even hot pink

At its height, this realm extended from the southern western coast across a significant portion of the Far South and the nearer Far East. It is believed to have reached as far as the Melukkan Peninsula and in the Far South—occupying, within this area of the world, the land of Barsa (a transitional zone between south and east), parts of Ofir, and eventually extending as far as what is now Zangvebar.

Like most elven peoples—though somewhat later than others—the downfall of the Aen Nílfe came with the arrival of humans. In their case, this occurred through the rise and rivalry with the first major human political entity, the Imperium, and more specifically with the fall of their so-called Golden Empire.

This collapse forced them into several paths: either to disappear within their successors—primarily what would become the Kingdom of Nilfgaard—to integrate into the various human societies of the regions they once ruled, or to remain independent while becoming a mere shadow of what they had once been in more than one sense.

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Etymology

Unlike other elven peoples—whose names were tied to their condition or the environments they inhabited, as seen in Aen Seidhe (People of the Hills), Aen Elle (People of the Alders), Aen Laöre (People of the Laurels), Aen Taoide (People of the Tide), or Aen Ghele (People of the Glacier), among others—the name of the Aen Nílfe carried a less literal and more poetic meaning.

In this sense, it more closely resembled that of their shared ancestors, the Aen Undod (The United People).

Their designation as the *People of the Mist* stemmed from a poetic belief: that they themselves were the condensation of moisture—the mist—which, after spreading across the world, would eventually fall and transform into water, nourishing the land and allowing it to flourish into a new paradise.

History

Origins

The Aen Nílfe were, alongside the Aen Taoide (*People of the Tide*) and the Aen Ghele (*People of the Glacier*), among the earliest distinct elven cultures to emerge in the world.

In their case, they originated from a blending of Aen Seidhe who migrated south and Aen Elle who did not depart to the world of Faërie.

Following the First Conjunction of the Spheres, they would also receive influence from the Aen Feainne (*People of the Sun*). After the fall of their state, they were further shaped by human influence—primarily from the ancestors of the Nilfgaardians, and to a lesser extent from other groups inhabiting the territories they once dominated.

The Birth of the Aen Nílfe (1000s B.R.)

The emergence of the Aen Nílfe began in the 1000s Before the Resurrection, roughly in the middle of the elven Golden Age, the Age of Migration.

By this time, elven peoples had already spread across most of the western coast, establishing kingdoms that ranged from over a millennium old (up to around 1230

years) to at least a century in age. In many cases—ironically, given their later stance toward humans—these territories had been taken from prior inhabitants of other species.

Their existence came about as a result of a major shift: most of the Aen Elle began to view this world as uninteresting and departed for a more "*intriguing*" reality. Only a small number remained behind, including those settled near the Alba Valley.

This massive depopulation triggered a response from northern Aen Seidhe kingdoms, which chose to rid themselves of problematic or dissident elements by sending them south—where they could establish their own societies without disrupting domestic harmony. Some of these exiles traveled as far as the lands inhabited by the remaining Elle near the Alba Valley.

Due to their own population losses, these Elle welcomed the newcomers. Over time, this led to cultural exchange, which evolved into friendship, then into romantic bonds, and eventually into shared offspring. This generational blending resulted in cultural and biological fusion.

By the 500s Before the Resurrection, the first individuals identifiable as Aen Nílfe emerged among the grandchildren of these mixed unions. However, it was not until the 1st century After the Resurrection—over two centuries after the end of the Age of Migration—that they became a culturally distinct group.

At that point, the Aen Saevherne of this Seidhe–Elle union recognized their genetic potential. They saw them as a means to stabilize and strengthen their Arctic breeding stock—the Aen Ghele—and to help recover key genetic traits that had already been lost.

However, over time—and due to a combination of factors, including the rise of distinctly Nílfe Aen Saevherne—their ambitions grew unchecked, leading them to go far beyond this original purpose.

The Founding of the Kingdom of Mil Trachta and Its Fall (830s B.R. – 110s A.R.)

While the Aen Nílfe were emerging as an elven ethnicity and culture in the south, in what is now Metinna, a state would arise that would prove key in the formation of the great Nílfe polity, Ór Ard Rhion: the Kingdom of Mil Trachta.

This kingdom emerged in the region during the end of the Age of False Harmony,

when the bobolaks—alongside other non-human allies attempting to reclaim lands once taken from them by elves—indirectly enabled the independence of the remaining Aen Elle within the last significant elven power of the area, Glen Muire, of Seidhe origin.

Their rival power, Centloch, of Aen Elle origin, had previously been locked in a prolonged cold war with Glen Muire—one that eventually escalated. However, when the Elle departed for a more "*interesting*" universe, Centloch effectively ceased to exist.

The few remaining Elle in Metinna—so few that they were nearly considered extinct—had been integrated into Glen Muire. There, they preserved and expanded upon ancient Aen Elle constructions, until they were able to break away and form a new political entity. They established their dominion through bloody wars of conquest, enslaving other sentient species—bobolaks, vrans, follets, among others—many of whom had originally supported the alliance of bobolaks, dwarves, and gnomes that had sought to reclaim what is now Metinna. As a result, the bobolaks were left with only a small portion of their ancestral lands.

This state of affairs persisted until, from the south—more specifically from Ebbing—the human nomadic group known as the Markee arrived, along with their horses. Upon their arrival, and due in part to the comparatively smaller scale of Mil Trachta, they swiftly defeated the Elle enclave.

The surviving Elle were forced to migrate south and join the Aen Nílfe, giving rise to their ethnocentrism—fueled by the resentment carried by these displaced Elle.

All of this took place between 170 and 10 Before the Resurrection, more specifically in the 110s. The Markee would later go on to fundamentally alter the situation in the Metinna region through their conflicts with the remaining bobolaks and the elven kingdom of Glen Muire—and, to a lesser extent and without realizing it, also reshape parts of the south and east of the Old Continent through the resulting population displacements.

The Birth of Ór Rhion and later Ór Ard Rhion and its Height (830 Before the Resurrection – 4 After the Resurrection)

This group would go on to found the kingdom of Ór Rhion, later renamed Ór Ard Rhion, the so-called Golden Empire, as they grew in both power and size. Its

capital was Nífl Garðr—an urban, ideological, and even genetic predecessor of what would eventually become Nilfgaard.

Politically, the Golden Empire laid the direct foundation for the Nilfgaardian state, and an indirect precedent for the Imperium, the first human empire as mentioned earlier. It should be noted, however, that the latter—despite emerging earlier than Nilfgaard's formal rise—was neither a continuation of nor historically connected to the Golden Empire or the Nilfgaardian lineage that followed.

Expansion (830s Before the Resurrection – 220s Before the Resurrection)

Following this, the Aen Nílfe launched a series of military expansions, reaching as far south as Zangvebar by the 220s Before the Resurrection.

These campaigns were originally conceived as pragmatic conquests—meant to ensure long-term survival and prosperity as a kingdom. However, due to the influence and ideological shift driven by the Aen Saevherne, they gradually transformed into something far more ambitious.

Their civilization reached its zenith during the 4th century Before the Resurrection, after which it began a slow but steady decline. By that time, the emergence of the Imperium began to displace the Golden Empire as the dominant geopolitical force along the western coast of the Old Continent.

Initial Campaigns in the Alba Basin and surrounding territories

The first phase consisted of the conquest of much of the Alba Basin and its surrounding territories. Their reach extended northward to the southern edge of what is now Vicovaro, and southward across nearly all regions adjacent to the Alba Valley, except for its northernmost zone.

This campaign was initially carried out by the original Seidhe–Elle group, but was completed by the early Aen Nílfe around 500 Before the Resurrection. This is why later Nílfe generations regarded it as part of their own legacy.

Maritime Expansion and the Birth of Ór Ard Rhion

Following this, the Nílfe turned to a maritime campaign, conquering a series of islands off the southern coast of the western seaboard—some of which were controlled by trading outposts of their Aen Taoide cousins.

This led to the formal birth of Ór Ard Rhion around 400 Before the Resurrection. The Nílfe forced the Taoide to establish kingdoms on these islands—the only Taoide kingdoms in history—which were subordinated to Ór Rhion. This restructuring transformed the original kingdom into a "*High Kingdom*," hence the name Ór Ard Rhion.

It was also during this period that the first genetic caste system—with its subcastes—was implemented, originally intended to prevent a potential Taoide takeover under certain conditions.

Western Barsa Campaign

After the maritime expansion, the Nílfe launched the Western Barsa campaign, which lasted approximately 170 years.

Their armies and settlers arrived in Western Barsa, then still undergoing desertification. There, they established fortified city-colonies and incorporated large portions of the region into their dominion.

Although Western Barsa contributed little in terms of wealth or resources—despite having both kingdoms and provinces (a key reason why Ór Ard Rhion is often mistranslated as an empire)—its strategic importance was immense. These cities became staging grounds for expeditions into Ofir and beyond, allowing the Golden Empire to extend its reach as far as Zangvebar at its peak.

Expansion into Ofir and Melukka

With Western Barsa secured, the Nílfe pursued two objectives: Establish colonies in what is now Ofir, to reduce future conquest times and expand eastward into Melukka

It is believed that proto-Nílfe explorers may have already reached Melukka around 1000 Before the Resurrection—likely driven by exploratory curiosity—but this remains uncertain.

In practice, many of these colonies became independent kingdoms to accelerate development and adapt to external pressures. These were later reabsorbed into Ór Ard Rhion when circumstances allowed.

The First Conjunction of the Spheres

The Nílfe were ultimately unable to fully conquer Ofir due to an unforeseen

event: the First Conjunction of the Spheres.

This forced them to contend with monsters and sentient beings from other realities. As a result, their strategy shifted—they began enslaving these newcomers to both maintain their borders and continue pursuing their long-term objective.

This disruption delayed further expansion by approximately a decade, pushing the integration of southern territories into the 220s Before the Resurrection.

The Aen Fomuire and Early Setbacks

During this period, the Nílfe also faced their first meaningful setbacks—not major military defeats, but significant strategic losses.

The subjugated Aen Taoide abandoned their territories and answered the call of the somewhat unstable Aen Saevherne Balarr—later known as Balor—who sought to reorganize his people after the loss of the Ard Gaeths and multiversal trade.

This gave rise to the Aen Fomuire *(People of the Undersea, Undersea Folk)*.

Their emergence forced the Nílfe to divert resources, reinforce coastal defenses, and repopulate the now vulnerable islands. Some of the Aen Fomuire began raiding their shores in retaliation—and out of a perceived need to preserve their identity in a world increasingly dominated by monsters and unfamiliar sentient beings such as humans.

Over time, this strategy evolved into disguising themselves as sea monsters during raids along the southern coasts, particularly in Ofir and Zangvebar during the later human era.

The Conquest of Zangvebar (220s A.R.)

The final great conquest was made possible by the unification of the two major kingdoms that had once been colonies—the kingdoms of Darwen and Pryshia—which, like other Nílfe former colonies, as previously mentioned, were integrated into Ór Ard Rhion, in their case after merging into a single entity.

The empire continued its advance, conquering territories such as Barsa—also known as Eastern Barsa—and the already mentioned Melukka, before reaching the distant land of Zangvebar in the 110s Before the Resurrection. However, given the possibility of a unifying empire in Melukka between 1000 Before and

the 770s After the Resurrection, it is likely that earlier proto-Nílfe settlers—and later the Nílfe themselves—had already established a presence there, which would explain the rapid conquest of the peninsula in that case.

Infiltration and Political Manipulation

It was during this period of instability that the Aen Nílfe saw an opportunity. Recognizing the strategic importance of the region—both for its resources and its role as a gateway to further southern expansion—they began to engage in trade with the local Merchant Princes.

They offered goods and magical knowledge that the human merchants could not resist. These exchanges laid the groundwork for deeper political ties, as the elves deliberately exploited the divisions among the city-states of the peninsula.

Although their introduction of the use of magic to the region was the only positive outcome, it was far from the peaceful approach once used by their Aen Seidhe cousins in the North—first with non-Nordling humans (leading to the emergence of druids), and later with Nordlings, where similar efforts ultimately failed.

Protectorates and Loss of Sovereignty

Sensing an opportunity to consolidate their power and gain an advantage over rival city-states, many Merchant Princes entered into agreements with the Nílfe. These typically took the form of protectorate treaties: the elves would provide military and magical support in exchange for allegiance.

Eager to secure dominance, the Merchant Princes accepted—unaware of the true cost.

The Nílfe began infiltrating the political structures of these states, gradually shifting from allies to overlords.

Subjugation and Colonial Rule

What began as mutually beneficial partnerships soon became outright domination.

The Nílfe used their superior magic and military capabilities to seize control, reducing the once-powerful Merchant Princes to puppet rulers. Their promises of protection proved to be a façade; instead of safeguarding the city-states, they stripped them of autonomy.

This transformation was gradual but relentless, as the elves tightened their control over Zangvebar, turning its city-states into colonies of their expanding dominion.

They then imposed their rule over the native human populations. This period of colonization was marked by widespread enslavement, social restructuring, and the forced mixing of various ethnic groups into the dominant cultural blocs of what would later become modern Zangvebar.

Resistance and Decline

The harsh treatment of the local population fueled growing unrest. Resistance movements emerged, culminating in a series of revolts that significantly weakened the Nílfe hold over the territory by the time of the collapse of Ór Ard Rhion.

The End of Expansion (4th Century A.R.)

The end of Aen Nílfe expansion came in the 4th century After the Resurrection. As they attempted to expand into the Ezmesáhpyr peninsula, near Zangvebar, they encountered a climate and terrain that proved hostile in multiple ways.

At first, this resulted in a significant loss of both time and manpower. Despite this, they continued to push forward, even extending their ambitions toward territories west of the Amapaba Basin over a prolonged period.

This relentless expansion led to a massive drain on resources, which in turn triggered uprisings. Although these revolts were suppressed, they instilled a growing fear within the state: that continued, uncontrolled expansion would ultimately lead to collapse.

As a result, a new strategy was developed—one focused on consolidation and internal development before resuming large-scale expansion toward their ultimate goal.

However, this strategy was never fully implemented, as Ór Ard Rhion fell before it could be properly realized.

The Influence of Other Species (4th Century — 5th Century A.R.)

From the 4th century onward, the system under which the Aen Nílfe lived began to become unsustainable due to various factors—chief among them, the very

design of the system itself.

This led to a series of internal crises, including orc uprisings and slave revolts—sometimes even occurring simultaneously due to the connection between them. These crises were poorly addressed, as they were patched over through cultural arrogance rather than through any meaningful revision or restructuring of the system.

One of these crises—one that would later resurface with greater force and become a key element in their downfall—was the gradual development of empathy toward their non-elven subjects.

This was especially prevalent among those castes and subcastes composed of Nílfe who were furthest removed from positions of power.

As a result of these inadequate responses and persistent arrogance, tensions slowly but inevitably accumulated. By the 8th century, their combined weight led to the collapse of Ór Ard Rhion—and with it, the supposed grand destiny of the Nílfe.

The Fall of the Golden Empire and the Rise of Dissent (4th–6th Century A.R.)

As the Golden Empire began to collapse under the weight of its own ambition, internal contradictions, and structural overreach, a growing number of dissenting voices emerged from within its borders. These reformist factions—composed primarily of Aen Nílfe philosophers, artists, officials, and minor aristocrats—sought to transform the empire from within.

Central to their ideology was the belief that slaves—who formed a substantial part of the empire's economic and logistical backbone (though not to the same extent as among the Aen Elle)—should be granted the same rights as elves. Their aim was not only to curb the growing wave of provincial and slave uprisings, but also to ensure the long-term survival of the Golden Empire, especially as it entered a cold war with the emerging Imperium along its northern borders.

This movement, later referred to by scholars as the Noveo Edenists (*Renovation of the New Edenists*), or in Elder Speech, *Nua Gannéadane*, still upheld the core doctrine of the Nílfe by that era: the construction of a better paradise through the refinement of the elven race. However, they proposed a radical reinterpretation—perhaps paradise had not yet been achieved due to elven arrogance, and

perhaps the so-called "*lesser races*" possessed knowledge essential to its restoration. The solution, they argued, was not domination, but dialogue and cooperation.

Unfortunately, their calls for reform were met not with debate, but with swift and brutal repression. The rise of Queen (sometimes misnamed Empress) Merwyn aep Darach—later known as *Merwyn I*—marked a sharp turn toward authoritarian consolidation.

Under her rule, the Noveo Edenists were declared traitors. Persecution followed, culminating in mass executions and purges.

Yet paradoxically, this repression only accelerated the spread of their ideas. Sympathetic factions within the elven population began to organize in secret, eventually leading to what historians would later call the Shadowed Spring Coup. Although the coup failed to overthrow the imperial court, it succeeded in one objective: the assassination of Merwyn.

The aftermath was devastating. A continuist regency council, loyal to Merwyn's policies, seized control and intensified repression. By this point, the ideological rift had spread across all social strata, igniting a full-scale civil war.

This conflict became known as the *War of Siblings*, the *War of the Long Sad Summer*, or more poetically, The Kinstrife—a brutal struggle in which, as the name suggests, brother fought against brother, each defending their own vision of paradise.

Merwyn moments before her death

The Kinstrife (6th Century – 770s A.R.)

The civil war raged for nearly two centuries. Although both sides suffered catastrophic losses, the rebellious faction—who would later give rise to the Aen Laöre (*People of the Laurels*)—was ultimately defeated.

Their failure was due not only to the superior resources of the imperial faction, but also to internal divisions, strategic disagreements, and ideological fractures within their own movement.

The Extinction of Ór Ard Rhion (770s–780s A.R.)

However, the civil war—combined with the earlier mismanagement of internal

crises—ultimately led to the collapse of what had once been a vast and powerful nation.

Subjugated territories, taking advantage of the chaos, began to declare independence. A notable example was Zangvebar, which managed to free itself from Nílfe rule thanks to the Paladins of Zang.

This was followed by the typical cascade of collapse: economic breakdown due to sustained losses, widespread unrest, further uprisings, and systemic disintegration.

But this was not yet the final blow.

The final blow would come from the very region that had once been crucial to their expansion—Barsa.

The Fall in Barsa and the Final Collapse

According to Barsamen traditions, the turning point came with the arrival of a priestess from Hannu, exiled from her homeland. Seeking refuge among the nomadic tribes of escaped slaves roaming the deserts of Barsa, she claimed to have experienced a divine revelation and to carry within her womb the legendary Altawayimu—the Twins long prophesied in the syncretic slave lore that had emerged from the blending of multiple Barsamen faiths under elven oppression.

She became known as the She-Prophet, founder of a new monolatrist creed that elevated her god above all others.

The Twins themselves—whether real historical figures, mythologized composites of countless slave-heroes, or something in between—remain a subject of debate. What is undisputed is their impact. Once grown, their charisma and leadership united the scattered nomadic tribes into a powerful force.

Their stated goal was to liberate Barsa from elven domination, though many chroniclers suggest a deeper ambition: to claim the land for themselves and establish a theocracy devoted to spreading their mother's "*true faith*" across the world.

What followed was remembered as a jihad—a *holy war*. Though details vary from one Barsamen taifa to another, all accounts agree on the outcome: the Golden Empire withdrew. Its provinces, kingdoms, and colonies in Barsa were abandoned, left to the vengeance of the newly freed Barsamen.

Only Zerzura, the White City, endured as a visible remnant of the elven legacy—later "*humanized*," but never entirely stripped of its origins.

The Birth of Nilfgaard

This marked the final blow.

The former heart of Ór Ard Rhion transformed into the Kingdom of Nífl Garðr—which would later evolve into the kingdom, republic, and ultimately empire of Nilfgaard.

By this point, humans—once a minority—had surpassed the elven population, largely due to the immense losses suffered by the elves during the civil war. In time, they inherited the territory, carrying forward the legacy of what had once been the Golden Empire.

Legacy

After the fall of Ór Ard Rhion, the Aen Nílfe became a shadow of what they once were.

Ironically, they were surpassed by the descendants of the civil war rebels—the Aen Laöre (often misnamed *Wood Elves*, at least until they too suffered at the hands of humans)—as well as by other unrelated elven groups such as the Aen Feainne.

Over time, the Nílfe were reduced to little more than a historical footnote. Just as they had once absorbed others, they themselves were now absorbed, becoming a minority.

Only a few populations survived independently, the most notable being the Aen Nílfe of the Ardawanne Mountains, organized into metakoinonías—a social structure somewhere between a clan, a tribe, and a people.

Migration and Northern Encounters

During the beginning of their decline, some Nílfe migrated north along the western coast—at a time when the region had only recently (around twenty years prior) been settled by human Nordlings.

Their encounters—much like those with their Aen Seidhe cousins—were largely negative. Over time, they were either exterminated or forced into reservations, where their blood gradually blended into future Seidhe generations.

As a result, by at least the 13th century, Nordlings remembered them simply as the "*Black Seidhe*," a term derived in part from their typically darker complexion.

Final Departure

Despite this decline, they did not go fully extinct and endured until 1358. That year, with the arrival of the Second Conjunction of the Spheres, they—like other elven populations such as the Seidhe—departed from the world.

Using an Ard Gaeth that opened in a certain region of the Great Sea (later known as the Mad Sea), they crossed into another reality, determined to once again attempt to recover—or improve—the lost paradise, in another time and another place.

Range

Following their decline, remnants of the Aen Nílfe could be found across a wide area: from the Alba Basin and adjacent territories along the western coast, to the south, southwest, northwest, northeast and northern regions of Ofir, as well as parts of Melukka and, to a lesser extent, Zangvebar.

Culture

Architecture

Broadly speaking, the architecture of the Aen Nílfe can be described as a blend of Seidhe and Elle architectural traditions.

What most clearly set it apart were the colors and underlying principles. Black was widely used, symbolizing the absence of color—and therefore, in their worldview, perfection. Gold was equally prominent, representing the paradise they aspired to achieve.

Additionally, their architectural design relied heavily on the use of the golden ratio, both in structure and form, as they saw its existence as proof that perfection could be achieved in an objective, measurable way.

Art

There is not much to elaborate on in general terms. Like other elven peoples, the Aen Nílfe excelled in the arts.

What most distinguished their artistic expression, however, was found in music: a predominant use of minor tonalities, often combined with instruments that generated sound through the movement of water.

In other artistic forms, their work was marked by a recurring focus on themes of loss, longing, peace as an eternal state, and perfection—the latter understood in a way similar to how other cultures might conceive of glory.

Currency

The currency of the Aen Nílfe was made of purified gold and crafted according to the golden ratio. It was known as darn (Elder Speech: *fragment or piece*).

As a curious detail, since noble wealth was not stored in banks but in private fortresses, these locations began to adopt the prefix Darn followed by the family name of their owners, indicating possession. This practice was later inherited by humans, who continued to use the naming convention—albeit without the original association to stored treasure.

This is why, in Nilfgaard and neighboring territories, many fortresses bear this prefix, such as Darn Dí (Piece of the Dí), Darn Mylne (Piece of the Foxes), or Darn Dyffra (Piece of the Dyffra), among others.

Calendar

The Aen Nílfe followed the same calendar structure as other elven peoples, but not in form. The names of the months were replaced with those of the most prominent pinnacles.

Castes

It is very difficult to fully describe the caste system of the Aen Nílfe due to its extreme complexity in every sense. However, some of the most notable castes can be highlighted, such as the following:

- **Fyalsav'rhena (or Fyalsav´rhon in the masculine form)**: Translated as *philosopher-queens* or *philosopher-kings*, they were the ruling elite—scholar-priests who governed with wisdom and cold precision. However, in many cases, they were unknowingly controlled by the Aen Saevherne, effectively serving as their puppets.
- **Curad'tiarnae (tiarna in singular)**: Translated as *warrior-lords*, they formed

the military caste, responsible for enforcing the rule of the fyalsav'rhena/rhon with unwavering devotion. They were raised from birth to view war as a sacred duty—a means of purifying the world.
- **Mealltae (meallta in singular)**: Translated as *seducers*, they were the backbone of Aen Nílfe society. They controlled internal trade (the only form of trade that truly existed), industry, and infrastructure. They financed expansion and ensured that wealth flowed upward through the system.

Coming of Age

The age of majority among the Aen Nílfe was variable, depending on both caste and whether the individual was elven or not.

For high-ranking elves, it was typically reached around the age of 30. In this regard, it was similar to their Aen Elle ancestors—who came of age at 35—but differed from their Aen Seidhe ancestors, who reached adulthood at 18.

This variation was primarily due to differences in lifespan. The Nílfe occupied an intermediate position between both groups, with an average lifespan of around 500 years.

After their decline—and the subsequent influence of humans and the Aen Feainne on both their culture and genetics—this lifespan was reduced to approximately 410–450 years. That is, only slightly longer than that of the Seidhe (around 400 years), and notably shorter than that of the Elle (600–650 years).

The later age of majority among high-status elves was also influenced by a shared biological limitation across their species: infertility beginning around the age of 100.

Customs

Their customs varied depending on caste, though many originated from either Aen Elle or Aen Seidhe traditions. However, all were filtered through a single criterion: whether they contributed to the pursuit of perfection.

As a result, many of the more naturalistic customs of the Seidhe were discarded, having been deemed ineffective for that purpose.

This does not mean they disrespected nature. On the contrary, they did respect it—but not from an aesthetic or ecological standpoint. Instead, their approach was pragmatic: nature had to be preserved because, otherwise, the envisioned

paradise would be flawed—and thus not truly a paradise, but merely an elaborate illusion.

Discrimination

Discrimination did exist among the Aen Nílfe, but—contrary to what one might expect—it was not based on race per se (as that would imply judging by appearance), but on genetics.

In other words, they did not hate others simply for belonging to a different species. What they rejected was inefficiency—being deemed unfit or insufficiently useful for the long-term objective.

This is also why the Nilfgaardian historical narrative tends to trace its origins back to the 2nd century After the Resurrection—long before the Kingdom of Nilfgaard itself existed. It was during this period that the Nílfe recognized the utility of the human tribes within their territory—particularly their faster reproductive capacity—and began to interbreed with them in order to acquire this trait, thus accelerating their path toward their ultimate goal.

Diet

The diet of the Aen Nílfe was omnivorous, much like that of other elven peoples. However, it was significantly more varied due to their expansionism, incorporating foods and ingredients from the many territories under their control.

Divorce

Divorce did exist among the Aen Nílfe, but it required approval—or was even actively encouraged—by the state.

Education

Education among the Aen Nílfe was state-controlled, species-exclusive (as it was only permitted to elves), ethnocentric, and highly specialized.

It was structured according to the caste into which one was born, as well as the natural aptitude an individual displayed. If a person's aptitude did not align with their caste but was exceptionally strong from the outset, there existed the possibility of mobility into a caste better suited to that ability, allowing it to be

properly developed.

In certain cases—such as particularly powerful Sources—individuals could even step outside the caste system entirely to be trained as Aen Saevherne, thereby contributing to the continued perpetuation of the system itself.

Fashion

Fashion varied by caste. Therefore, it is impossible to define a standard style for the Aen Nílfe. The most that can be said is that among the aristocracy, clothing was notable for its complexity in both design and style, and usually incorporated golden lines done randomly that reminded them both that they were still imperfect and the perfection that they wanted to achieve (only in the case of those more close to perfection, the golden lines had some sense), clothing was generally (but not always) of dark tones and that the lower the caste, the simpler the clothing became.

Example of the typical clothing worn by female royalty

Funerary Customs

If a body held any scientific value, it was handed over to the authorities for study. Otherwise, it was cremated to prevent potential enemies from making use of it.

In the case of slaves, they were buried in mass graves.

Only the pinnacles, due to their elevated status, received what could be considered a "*traditional*" burial—interred in temple-mausoleums dedicated to them.

Government

The Aen Nílfe followed a system of governance similar to that of their Seidhe cousins during the time when they maintained multiple independent kingdoms. The key difference lay in its increasing complexity as their state, Ór Rhion, expanded in size and power and eventually evolved into Ór Ard Rhion. Additionally, their system can be described, in part, as a technocratic-elective monarchy.

Inventions

The Aen Nílfe created many inventions, most of them aimed at supporting their conquests.

Among the most notable—if not the most significant—were what human Nordling mages would later call xenovoce.

In the Nílfe case, these devices allowed bidirectional communication, unlike the later non-elven versions, which only enabled one-way transmission.

It should be noted, however, that this is considered their most important invention largely because others—such as the rumored portable mega-scope—were never conclusively verified.

during funerals of pinnacles

Language

The language used by the Aen Nílfe was a form of Elder Speech influenced by Ellylon, the tongue derived from Elder Speech spoken by the Aen Elle. This constituted the main distinguishing feature of their variant.

As expected, the slave caste spoke a wide variety of creoles, many of which survived long after the fall of Ór Ard Rhion.

Another notable and important difference was the complexity of their vocabulary. Due to the high value they placed on poetry, many of their words were more intricate than in standard Elder Speech. As a result, while it was not particularly difficult to communicate with them fluently, understanding them in depth was far more challenging.

In fact, a Seidhe saying captures this well: "*harder than a southern tongue-twister.*"

Magic

Magic among the Aen Nílfe was broadly similar to that of other elven peoples and humans. It was studied in academies and primarily practiced by mages.

The key differences lay in access and specialization.

Access to magical training was restricted to certain castes, in line with their broader social structure. Particularly powerful Sources—especially the most exceptional ones—as mentioned earlier, were removed from the caste system entirely to be trained as Aen Saevherne.

Furthermore, depending on an individual's magical potential, their studies could be limited to a single element or, in the case of higher (though not exceptional) aptitude, to multiple elements—typically up to three.

The Aen Saevherne, however, stood apart by mastering all five primary elements, and often additional para-elements, due to their superior capacity.

Mental Traits

The Aen Nílfe were a people of contradictions. They were warrior-priests, philosophers of conquest, and mystics with imperial ambitions.

Unlike many of the wandering and dispossessed Aen Seidhe, the Aen Nílfe were deeply rooted in the lands they had claimed. They ruled with the conviction that they alone were destined to bring balance to the world—by transforming it into their promised paradise: a place of endless, pure, and beautiful perfection… even if it meant breaking the world first.

They did not see themselves as mere elves. They believed they were the rightful shepherds of the world, divinely ordained to rule over the chaotic and directionless mortals beneath them.

To resist them was not simply rebellion—it was defiance against the natural order itself.

Philosophy

Like other elven peoples, the Aen Nílfe believed in the restoration of the paradise they once had in the world from which they originated, Gannéadan. However, given the destruction of that reality, they sought to recreate it elsewhere—a concept that humans of the western coast, through their ancestral collective memory, would later mistakenly refer to as "*Eden*" once both races began to clash and coexist.

The key difference lay in how they intended to achieve this.

Due to their partial Aen Elle heritage, they inherited cultural elements such as slavery and elven supremacy. They believed that the destruction of Gannéadan had not been caused by natural forces, but by their own imperfection—that had they been perfect, the catastrophe could have been prevented.

Therefore, in order to restore paradise, they sought to improve the species itself.

And what better way, in their view, than enslaving other races to use them as both labor and biological material—rebuilding the lost paradise not only physically, but genetically. By extracting what they considered the "best" traits from each species for elvenkind, they aimed to achieve perfection.

In doing so, they believed they were also granting those beings a "*noble purpose*": contributing to the construction of paradise on earth. At the same time, they saw themselves as "*helping*" these races by "*eliminating their impurities*" and integrating them into what they envisioned not as a "*superior*" species, but a definitive one.

Fortunately, this long and extreme process was never fully realized.

Evolution of Their Philosophy

By the final years of Ór Ard Rhion, most Aen Nílfe elites no longer sought merely to restore the lost paradise, but to improve it through the creation of the definitive species.

This shift occurred gradually, largely driven by the arrogance born from their long chain of successful conquests. Among the general elven population, however, the original philosophy—albeit with certain adaptations—remained largely intact.

Religion

The religious outlook of the Aen Nílfe was fundamentally elven-centric. Within their worldview, they believed the gods had abandoned them due to their imperfection. As such, worship was seen as pointless—since, in their eyes, the gods would not heed beings they had already rejected.

The closest equivalents to deities within their culture were the so-called pinnacles: individuals who stood at the absolute peak of a given trait or domain. These figures were believed to be the precursors of future perfection—their descendants, through continued refinement, would eventually give rise to beings embodying that perfection. In turn, this would bring about the restoration of paradise once enough such lineages existed and intermingled.

In this sense, pinnacles occupied a conceptual space somewhere between to saints and deities in many human religions.

After the fall of Ór Ard Rhion, at least the Aen Nílfe who remained in Nilfgaard

abandoned their former beliefs and adopted the faith of the Great Sun, as their previous faith was perceived to have "*failed*" them. This shift would eventually contribute to the establishment of the Great Sun religion as the official faith of the empire formed by their human descendants.

Long-Term Plans

The long-term vision of the Aen Nílfe consisted of creating multiple species, each excelling in a specific trait, and all genetically compatible with one another. These species would eventually interbreed, giving rise to the *definitive species*.

This goal is, in large part, what underpinned their caste system based on genetics. Being compatible with elven biology significantly shortened the long process, bringing the realization of paradise closer. As a result, those who were more compatible were considered "*more worthy*," and were granted greater rights—though never equal to those of an elf, for the simple reason that they were not one.

Mentality

Unlike other elven peoples, who tended to be more individualistic, the Aen Nílfe were characterized by an ethno-collectivist mindset shaped by their philosophy. In this regard, they were similar to certain Aen Ghele kingdoms of the Far North, which may explain the occurrence of intermarriages between members of both groups despite the vast distances separating them.

Also, the mindset of the Aen Nílfe can be summarized not as "*survival of the fittest,*" but rather as "*survival of the most necessary or useful for the long-term objective.*"

This principle underpinned their expansionist behavior. Their conquests were not driven by a desire for expansion for its own sake, but by the need to ensure their survival long enough to grow stronger—and ultimately transform the world into the paradise they had lost.

In their view, they themselves were the most necessary and useful agents for achieving that long-term goal.

Marriage

Marriages were always arranged and dictated by the state, as part of their

broader objective of achieving species perfection.

Same-sex marriages were prohibited for what they considered obvious reasons.

National Holidays

Traditional elven festivals were not celebrated among the Aen Nílfe. Instead, festivities were held in honor of the pinnacles who gave their names to the calendar—one celebration for each month.

The duration of these festivities was determined by half the day of the month on which the respective pinnacle had been born. This system served as a way to motivate the population toward the ultimate goal, fostering the idea that one day all days would become a celebration—once perfection had been achieved—and allowing for the proper honoring of the pinnacles.

Thus, if a pinnacle had been born on the 14th day of a given month, the celebration would last seven days; if on the 30th, fifteen days; if on the 2nd, a single day, and so on.

Number of Children per Woman

The number of children per woman was higher than that of any other elven people. This was largely due to state enforcement.

Although it varied depending on caste, the average was around five children per woman, typically spaced over long intervals—approximately one every twenty years.

Additionally, it was not uncommon for the state to impose fertility treatments on both women and men when deemed necessary.

Original Purpose

If the original purpose of gathering large numbers of elves in the Arctic—and thus the creation of the Aen Ghele—was to serve as breeding stock for the Aen Elle in order to recreate the Elder Blood and Elder Memory lost during the Age of Migration, then the original purpose of the Aen Nílfe was to act as an improvement and diversification of that breeding stock.

Their role was to prevent genetic degradation and maintain the elven condition, thus avoiding a potential divergence into a different species as adaptation to the

increasingly harsh cold progressed—especially given that time passes more rapidly in Nátalam than in Faërie.

However, as the Elle and the Nílfe gradually drifted apart—due to a combination of factors, including the difficulty of interdimensional travel without the Ard Gaeths and thus the lack of communication between realities—their original purpose began to evolve.

Over time, and driven largely by the unchecked ambitions of the Nílfe sages, this purpose ultimately transformed into the pursuit of creating the definitive species.

Society

Their society was pyramidal and divided into castes, with the king at the top and those furthest removed from elven lineage at the bottom. These lower strata—alongside many others—were, for the most part, composed of slaves.

Social mobility was not entirely absent, but rather highly selective.

Social Structure

The social structure of the Aen Nílfe was pyramidal and divided into castes, as previously mentioned, with the addition of subcastes.

The castes were not defined by profession, but by genetics—not "*racial purity,*" but rather the degree of genetic proximity to elven lineage. An individual's position within the hierarchy was determined by how closely their species (if they weren´t an elf) aligned, genetically, with that of an elf. In the case of elven populations this functions differently with the use mainly of subcastes.

As mentioned before, subcastes, on the other hand, functioned primarily—though not exclusively—as an internal organizational system among elves themselves (as even among slaves there existed further stratification, with some being considered "*more enslaved*" than others). Within the elven tiers of the pyramid, subcastes were used to rank individuals based on traits deemed more advantageous in the long-term pursuit of species perfection. Those possessing more "*desirable*" genetic traits occupied higher positions than others.

There was, however, one exception that both stood outside and reinforced the system: the sages, known as the Aen Saevherne. These figures acted—at least in theory, as hidden interests were almost certainly present—as neutral arbiters

responsible for determining which traits were most suitable, and therefore who should stand at the top of the hierarchy.

In practice, this granted them a form of indirect rule, similar to the role of the Aen Saevherne among the Aen Ghele—though in this case, exercised in an even more subtle manner.

Slavery

Slavery was a fully established institution among the Aen Nílfe—arguably *the* defining institution, given the purposes for which enslaved populations were used.

However, unlike among the Aen Elle, its role within the economy was relatively limited, as enslaved individuals fulfilled functions considered far more important than simple labor. This does not mean that traditional uses of slavery—such as manual work—did not exist, but rather that they were not as prevalent.

This is largely due to the caste system based on genetics. As expected, different professions were distributed across this hierarchy: those with the "*best*" genetic traits either did not work or occupied the most desirable roles, while those with the "*worst*" traits were required to work and were confined to the least desirable occupations.

The only notable exceptions to this structure were the Aen Saevherne and the orcs. The former operated as arbiters essential to maintaining the system, while the latter were exempt due to having been specifically designed for their function.

Taboos

The Aen Nílfe shared many taboos with their ancestors—particularly the Aen Elle. However, they also developed their own, shaped by their ideology. Among the most notable were: learning slowly, failing as part of the learning process, prioritizing individual needs over collective ones, mediocrity, lack of directness, displaying unnecessary emotions (a trait later partially inherited by Nilfgaardian culture) and routine without purpose.

Toponymy

Place names among the Aen Nílfe were assigned primarily based on function,

rather than purely aesthetic or historical considerations. However, they were often overlaid with a poetic veneer, as poetry was regarded as the form of language closest to achieving perfection.

This is why, for example, their capital bore the name Nífl Garðr (Misty Garden). It represented a perfectly controlled environment, like a garden, belonging to the *People of the Mist*—a space from which, through expansion, they would eventually transform the world into the lost paradise once their reach had fully extended.

Women's Rights and Sexual Minorities

Among the Aen Nílfe, society was *de jure* matriarchal, structured in this way to ensure that the long-term plan would not collapse. This arrangement created the impression that women—being responsible for reproduction—were directing the species toward its ultimate goal.

In practice, however, the system was de facto patriarchal. Men occupying the highest tiers of the social hierarchy exercised a level of control that women could not, leveraging their ability to "*provide superior genes*" to multiple partners. Through this, they could elevate the social standing of those women via their offspring.

The façade of a matriarchal society was maintained by the Aen Saevherne, who used it as a mechanism to identify and eliminate candidates deemed to possess undesirable genetic traits.

As for sexual minorities, they held no rights if they were elven.

Among the slave caste, however, such matters were largely ignored and dismissed as "*concerns of inferiors*."

Related Species

Contrary to common belief, orcs are not "*corrupted elves*," nor evil, cursed beings, nor brutish creatures driven solely by destruction. Instead, they are post-elves created by the Aen Nílfe.

More specifically, they were the first of many species developed in the process of creating the "*perfect species*"—a pinnacle embodiment of a particular trait that would eventually serve as one of the upper building blocks of that final form. In

their case, they were designed to be the perfect warriors in every sense—not mindless killing machines, as the stereotype suggests.

While other species were still being developed, orcs were employed as shock troops and as guardians of slave populations. Ironically, during the fall of Ór Ard Rhion, this role led them to rebel against their creators. They allied themselves with so-called *"inferior*" beings such as goblins, with whom they formed strong empathetic bonds.

These bonds stemmed from their very design: as "*perfect warriors,*" it became increasingly impossible for them to reconcile the contradiction of subjugating defenseless beings rather than protecting them. In essence, they were not meant to be instruments of destruction, but honorable figures—individuals who wield destructive power not to create entropy, but to bring about positive change in the world.

Economy

The economy of the Aen Nílfe featured almost no international trade. The only exception was limited exchange with the Aen Taoide—and even then, only because the latter initiated contact.

Domestically, their economy was highly diversified, but fundamentally operated under a predatory imperial model. They saw no need for equal trade with other peoples, as they did not consider them equals—and because, in their long-term vision, the entire world would eventually belong to the definitive species, becoming a post-scarcity paradise.

The only notable instance in which they actively engaged in external trade was with the Merchant Princes of Zangvebar. Even then, this was done strategically—to exploit divisions among the various city-states of the region and ultimately facilitate their annexation.

Examples of Aen Nílfe Names

The naming conventions of the Aen Nílfe were largely structured and sounded similarly to those of the two cultures from which they originated—the Aen Seidhe and the Aen Elle.

However, unlike in most cultures—where names are given for aesthetic reasons,

in honor of others, or based on tradition—Aen Nílfe names functioned as indicators of an individual's natural aptitude.

This resulted in two distinct naming paths. If an individual's genetic traits were evident from birth, a name would be given immediately, as in many other cultures. Otherwise, naming was delayed until the child reached between three and six years of age, when their development made their natural aptitudes more apparent. Until then, they were simply referred to as "*boy*" or "*girl*."

As a result, most names were effectively unisex and followed a consistent structure: *Deas* (Elder Speech: apt), *atat* (for), followed by the relevant concept. For example: *Deasatatshaent* (Apt for song), *Deasatatrhyfel* (Apt for war), *Deasatathud* (Apt for magic), *Deasatatelaine* (Apt for beauty), *Deasatatsaevhern* (Apt for wisdom)

Of course, as in any system, exceptions existed. Infants whose aptitudes were immediately evident could receive distinct names from birth. The same applied to exceptionally gifted children. A notable example is Aevéna, who—according to Aen Ghele legends—traveled from her southern homeland to the Far North and married King Seighwar.

As for surnames, these were formed using the archaic form of the Nilfgaardian particle, var, that is, wvar (meaning *family of*), rather than the more commonly known aep (son/daugther of), which, while it did exist, was less frequently used. Surnames indicated the profession or social status of one's family. For example: *Deasatatsaevhern wvar Rhone* (Apt for wisdom, of the family of kings) or *Deasatathud wvar Torc'he* (Apt for magic, of the family of the powerful).

Finally, those considered traitors to the cause were named following the same structure—but instead of indicating their aptitude, their names reflected the form of punishment they were deemed fit for. These ranged from "*apt for experimentation*" to "*apt for elimination*," among others.

Physical Characteristics

Anaver

Like all elves, the Aen Nílfe were extremely beautiful and did not physically age. They possessed pointed ears, lacked cuspids and in the males, a laryngeal prominence and were generally tall.

Among the aristocratic caste, their average height was slightly below that of the Aen Elle—around 1.95 meters for women and 1.80 meters for men.

This became more variable over time as they intermingled with other peoples and races such as the Aen Feainne and humans. In contrast, the average so-called "*Black Seidhe*" was closer in height to that of humans.

They were of a darker complexion than most other elven peoples, though not as dark as the Aen Fomuire, who exhibited a melanism comparable to that of panthers. Their skin was typically olive or swarthy, though those who avoided sunlight could appear pale or even greyish—resulting in marked physical differences between castes and subcastes. Those with greater sun exposure could develop tones ranging from dark golden to light reddish hues, depending on the intensity of tanning: dark gold for moderate exposure beyond the swarthy baseline, and light red for more intense exposure. It is possible that—alongside sylvans—these traits contributed to, or reinforced, the mythological figure of the devil in human folklore.

Facially, they tended to have slender features and pronounced cheekbones. Their eye colors ranged widely—from amber, red, yellow, and black to even hot pink, with all intermediate shades also present. The same diversity applied to hair color, though it was most commonly black or amber, and typically wavy or curly.

As with all elves, males lacked facial and body hair, however in their case, they also had from time to time slightly smaller ears than females. They likewise shared the general elven absence of cuspids as mentioned before, and—similar to their Aen Seidhe cousins—the presence of epicanthic folds was rare.

In terms of physical proportions, at a certain point in their history their bodies began to conform to the golden ratio. This trait later became diluted through intermixing, though it persisted among individuals with more "*pure*" ancestry.

Notable Aen Nílfe

For the full list of known Aen Nílfe, see Category:Aen Nílfe

Aristocracy

- Merwyn aep Darach

Aen Nílfe man

Average Aen Nílfe woman

Aristocratic Aen Nílfe woman with ass

- Midir (part Aen Hagde)

Bards

- Éile

Curad'tiarnae

- Níamh

Mages

- Syndril Cullwyn
- Zacaré (part Aen Ghele)

Notable Aen Nílfe Locations

Cities

- Nífl Garðr

Fortresses

- Darn Mylne

Notable Aen Nílfe Territories

City-states

- Bach Eate (small summer)
- Ess´gloir (to be glory)
- Dacha atat Claío (home for Swords)
- Zerzura

Countries

- Nilfgaard (for a time)
- Ór Rhion

- Ór Ard Rhion (often miscalled the Golden Empire)

Image Credits

- Female Royalty Clothing during important funerals by Henry Lynch

Notes

- Article intended to be merged in the near future with the Aen Nílfe one.
- Beyond being an expansion of the so-called Black Seidhe mentioned in the books, the Aen Nílfe are also a reinterpretation more faithful to the books and games of the lore introduced in the Netflix miniseries *The Witcher: Blood Origin*, part of the attempted " *Witcher cinematic universe*." done by the company.
- Some elements—such as the mental traits and caste system—have been adapted from the homebrew TTRPG document Ofieri Cultures by Arby7499, where they also appear. For this reason, co-authorship has been credited in the article. However, the caste names have been modified and slightly adjusted to better fit the conventions of Elder Speech.
- This article was also conceived to serve as lore for TTRPG materials as well with the idea that, should someone one day attempt a remake of the miniseries, they would have stronger source material to work from—given that the original series was widely considered lacking, not only in terms of lore, but as a production overall.

Trivia

- The philosophy of the Aen Nílfe is partially inspired by the idea—associated with members of the now-defunct fascist Spanish political party, Falange Española[W]—that society should promote widespread mixing in order to create a so-called "*super-race*," a concept that, somewhat ironically, differs from Anglo-German fascist doctrines.
- The genetic caste division, on the other hand, draws less from real-world political movements and more from the system depicted in the novel *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley[W].
- The de jure matriarchal structure of the Aen Nílfe is conceived as a counter-

inspiration to the Drow of Dungeons & Dragons, aiming to present a more complex model rather than a simple inversion of patriarchal systems or the cliché of "*evil elves*."

    - Similarly, the institution of slavery within their society is a counter-inspiration to the Dunmer from The Elder Scrolls videogame series, who were designed to feel highly alien in most respects, except in that particular aspect.

- The fact that Eastern Barsa is often referred to simply as Barsa is a deliberate reference to real-world naming conventions. In the West, for example, West Germany[W] was commonly referred to simply as Germany, despite both East and West Germany existing at the time. Similarly, many people today refer to South Korea[W] simply as Korea, even though Korea as a term encompasses the entire peninsula. In this case, however, the situation is reversed: it is the eastern portion that becomes the default reference.

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breezewiki

BreezeWiki source code

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